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FM AMEMBASSY ASUNCION  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ASUNCION 2196

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR

TAGS: MASS, SHUM, PA

SUBJECT: (U) IMET FOR PARAGUAY: CONGRESSMAN FASCELL'S VIEWS

REF: (A) ASUNCION 1502, (B) ASUNCION 2129

1. (U) THE AMBASSADOR HAS JUST RECEIVED A LETTER DATED MARCH 22 FROM CONGRESSMAN DANTE FASCELL, IN RESPONSE TO THE AMBASSADOR'S LETTER TO HIM CONCERNING IMET FOR PARAGUAY (REF A). IN HIS LETTER, FASCELL NOTES THE PROHIBITION ON IMET FUNDS FOR PARAGUAY WHICH WAS INSERTED INTO THE INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION ACT OF 1984 BY THE HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, CONTINGENT ON PARAGUAY EXTRADITING JOSEPH MENGELE. HE STATES THAT HE SHARES THE CONCERN OF THE COMMITTEE OVER THE MATTER, "AND WILL NOT SUPPORT FURTHER ASSISTANCE TO PARAGUAY UNTIL THIS MATTER IS RESOLVED."

2. (LOU) WE SHOULD NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE STRENGTH WHICH THE MENGELE ISSUE WILL HAVE IN THE CONGRESS. OUR FILES SHOW THAT IN 1979, WHEN THE WEISENTHAL FOUNDATION ALLEGED THAT MENGELE WAS LIVING IN PARAGUAY, 57 MEMBERS OF CONGRESS WROTE TO PRESIDENT STROESSNER ON THE MATTER. OUR FILES ALSO SHOW A STRONG INTEREST IN MENGELE'S CASE ON THE PART OF SENATORS BOSCHWITZ AND MOYNIHAN.

3. (C) SINCE FASCELL'S LETTER IS IN REPLY TO THAT OF THE AMBASSADOR, WE DO NOT FEEL IT APPROPRIATE TO CONTINUE THE CORRESPONDENCE. NONETHELESS, THE "MENGELE AMENDMENT" SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO GO UNCHALLENGED. WE SUGGEST THAT SOMEONE FROM THE DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO CONTACT BOTH CONGRESSMAN SOLARZ AND OTHER KEY HOUSE MEMBERS AT LEAST TO REVIEW WHAT WE DO AND DO NOT KNOW ABOUT MENGELE AND PARAGUAY. OUR FILES SHOW THAT MENGELE FIRST VISITED PARAGUAY IN 1951, AND BECAME A PARAGUAYAN CITIZEN IN 1959. THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT REQUESTED HIS EXTRADITION IN 1962 AND THE PARAGUAYAN GOVERNMENT SUBSEQUENTLY ISSUED AN ORDER FOR HIS ARREST, AN ORDER WHICH WAS RE-ISSUED IN 1970 AND AGAIN THIS YEAR. IN 1979, UNDER CONSIDERABLE PUBLIC PRESSURE, THE PARAGUAYAN GOVERNMENT REVOKED MENGELE'S CITIZENSHIP. WHILE OUR FILES ARE FULL OF INFORMATION ABOUT ALLEGED SIGHTINGS OF MENGELE IN THE YEARS SINCE 1960, AND CONVERSATIONS WITH PEOPLE HERE WHO ALLEGEDLY KNEW HIM OR KNEW WHERE HE WAS, THERE IS NO HARD INFORMATION ON HIS WHEREABOUTS.

4. (C) UNFORTUNATELY, THE FACT IS THAT AT THIS POINT WE

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DO NOT KNOW IF MENGELE IS HERE IN PARAGUAY, OR EVEN WHETHER HE IS ALIVE OR NOT. OUR CONTACTS WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT ALL PROFESS TO HAVE NO KNOWLEDGE OF MENGELE'S WHEREABOUTS AND HAVE INSISTED THAT IF HE IS DISCOVERED HERE HE WILL BE ARRESTED AND EXTRADITED PROMPTLY. EARLIER THIS YEAR, FOLLOWING THE VISIT OF NAZI HUNTER BEATE KLARSFELD (WHO INSISTED THAT SHE KNEW MENGELE'S WHEREABOUTS HERE IN PARAGUAY BUT WAS UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO PROVIDE THE INFORMATION TO ANYONE HERE), A NEW ORDER FOR HIS ARREST WAS ISSUED. IN ADDITION, OUR DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES IN THE FRG AND ISRAELI EMBASSIES, WHO ARE MOST CONCERNED WITH THE MENGELE CASE, SAY THEY HAVE NO RELIABLE INFORMATION ABOUT MENGELE'S WHEREABOUTS. INDEED, THE ISRAELIS MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE STROESSNER GOVERNMENT (FOR THEIR OWN REASONS), INCLUDING PROGRAMS OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND MILITARY SALES. IN SUM, WE DO NOT KNOW OF ANY HARD EVIDENCE TO INDICATE THAT MENGELE IS IN PARAGUAY, AND IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THOSE OF OUR COLLEAGUES WHO WOULD BEST BE IN A POSITION TO KNOW HAVE NONE EITHER.

5. (LOU) ONE FINAL POINT. THE CONGRESS DOES NOT YET SEEM TO HAVE REACTED TO THE CLOSURE OF ABC COLOR, BUT WE ASSUME THAT AT SOME POINT THIS EVENT WILL ATTRACT THE ATTENTION OF OPPONENTS OF AID TO PARAGUAY. THE VISIT OF ABC EDITOR ENRIQUE BORDENAVE TO WASHINGTON LATER THIS MONTH (REF B) MAY WELL TRIGGER SOME KIND OF REACTION. THIS, ON TOP OF THE MENGELE PROBLEM, COULD FATALLY COMPROMISE OUR EFFORTS TO SALVAGE IMET FOR PARAGUAY. THE DEPARTMENT WILL THUS WANT TO BE ON THE WATCH FOR FURTHER AMENDMENTS RESTRICTING OUR PROGRAM IN PARAGUAY AS A RESULT OF THE ABC CLOSURE.

DAVIS

END OF MESSAGE

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